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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Several major Chinese-language dailies in Taiwan gave front-page coverage March 5 to President Chen Shui-bian's "Four Wants and One Without" remarks made at a banquet Sunday evening marking the 25th anniversary of the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA) -- namely, Taiwan wants independence, name changes, a new Constitution, and development, and Taiwan does not have issues of right or left, rather of unification or independence. News coverage on March 3-5 also focused on the Lantern Festival, the 2008 presidential elections, and the DPP government's plan to change the name of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall and tear down its surrounding wall. Both the pro-status quo "China Times" and pro-unification "United Daily News" devoted the front page and one inside page to discussing President Chen's "Four Wants and One Without" announcement and the Blue and Green camps' reactions to it. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" and the mass-circulation "Apple Daily," however, only gave limited coverage to the news on one of their inside pages. Today's evening paper, the "United Evening News," ran a front-page banner headline that said "Taiwan Stocks Shot down by Bian's Independence Arrow, Plunging by 285 Points."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "China Times" analysis said one of the reasons why President Chen added dosage to his "independence poison" by announcing the "Four Wants and One Without" was because his recent heavy-handed name change campaign has failed to stimulate Washington and Beijing as he had hoped. A "United Daily News" analysis, however, questioned if Chen can really make a clean break with the "Four Nos" pledge he made to the United States. A separate "United Daily News" column discussed a recent article by Shirley Kan, a U.S. Congressional Research Service expert, on Taiwan and the United States. The article said the reason why the DPP government has become so arrogant was closely related to the United States, which wants, but fails, to play well the Taiwan card between both sides of the Taiwan Strait. A "Liberty Times" editorial, on the other hand, discussed the recent U.S. arms sales to Taiwan announced by the Pentagon. The article said it is good that Washington has noticed the military imbalance in the Taiwan Strait, but it is worrisome that the arms deal will be blocked by the Blue camp in the Legislative Yuan again. An op-ed in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" commented on Taiwan's name change campaign and said, "(i)nstead of chasing after name changes of little consequence, the US had better try to determine what future relationship with Taiwan would best serve its interest." End summary.

A) "Bombshell of 'Four Wants and One Without': Bian Puts in 'Independence Poison,' of Which the Destructiveness Is Stronger Than Firecrackers [set off during the current Lantern Festival]"

Journalist Lin Shu-ling noted in an analysis in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (3/5):

"[The impetus for] Bian's surprise remarks was not untraceable.

First, he was invited to attend a banquet marking the 25th anniversary of the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA). Judging from previous experience, Chen normally makes remarks that cross the limit at pro-independence activities. Second, having walked out of the shadow of the 'Presidential Office Allowance for State Affairs case,' Chen immediately tilted himself toward the dark Green stalwarts, in an attempt to secure the pro-Bian strength of the Taiwan independence fundamentalists. Third, Lee Teng-hui was criticizing Bian again, and he could not stand Lee's provocative remarks. ...

"It has been nearly seven years since Bian came to power, and never has he publicly challenged the pledges he made to the United States like this before. The 'Four Wants and One Without' remarks Chen tossed out yesterday evening seemed in verbal parallelism to his 'Four Nos and One Without' pledge, but the obvious intent of these remarks was unprecedented. On the surface, Bian's move seemed a repetition of the DPP's routine practice prior to elections, in which it tries to boost campaigning for the Green camp by provoking China and stepping on the red line on purpose so as to spur Washington and Beijing into attacking the DPP government. On the other hand, Bian is more interested in building up his position as the 'paramount leader of independence supporters.' He hopes to kick Lee Teng-hui aside as well as restrain and direct the four DPP 'bigwigs' to follow the agenda he sets.

"Bian's recent move forcefully to push for the name change campaign in an almost authoritarian manner has in fact implied his intent to stimulate Washington and Beijing. But he failed to achieve what he desired -- Washington just expressed its routine concern without giving any harsh comments, while Beijing did not make any response at all. This must be one of the reasons why Chen decided to add dosage to his 'independence poison.' It is a little more than a year until [the] 2008 [presidential election]. Bian will not be able to continue controlling and manipulating the political situation, even if he wants to, after the DPP selects its

presidential candidates. It will be exactly what Chen hopes for if Washington and Beijing make a big move in the wake of his announcement of 'Four Wants and One Without.' In reality, what Chen fears most now is that neither the United States nor China pays any attention to him and that the 'four bigwigs' give no reaction to his remarks. ..."

B) "To Cut off the Pledges of Four Nos and One Without, Can Bian Do That?"

Washington correspondent Vincent Chang wrote in an analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (3/5):

"... It looks as if Chen Shui-bian wants to make a clean break with the 'Four Nos and one Without' pledge that he has made constantly to the Americans. The pro-independence supporters below the stage were indulged in and fascinated by Chen's speech. ... But it would seem a premature judgment if one asserts that Chen's 'Four Wants' announcement was akin to denying his 'Four Nos' pledge to the United States. Unless Chen announces that he has abandoned the 'Four Nos' pledge, there remains room [for him] to maneuver when he explains to the Americans about his 'Four Wants and One Without' in the future, be they lip service or not. ...

"As a matter of fact, the U.S. State Department was long prepared regarding Chen's speech at the FAPA annual meeting; it was just unclear about what Bian was going to say. Based on the Americans' understanding and what they have learned about Chen's behavior patterns, as well as his argument logic afterwards, even though Chen's 'Four Wants and One Without' announcement may trigger Washington's tension and concerns, the matter may drop temporarily following an exchange of 'questions and explanations,' if Chen does not pursue it with any follow-on moves and if such a situation is accepted by Washington. But Washington is clearly aware in its heart that this year will not be a quiet year for Taiwan. Chen has already announced that the island will push for its bid to join the United Nations under the name of Taiwan. Perhaps it will depend on whether Bian really means what he said to the pro-independence faction to tell whether the United States will continue to reiterate that its policy remains unchanged, or whether it will take further action to tighten its relations with Taiwan."

C) "Frog in the Well and Chicken Little"

The "Black and White" column in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] noted (3/5):

Shirley Kan, U.S. congressional expert on Taiwan affairs, recently used 'frog in the well' and 'Chicken Little' to describe the Taiwan-U.S. relationship. It goes without saying that Taiwan is the 'frog in the well' that draws a line limiting itself but blows its own horn. This is a fact well-known to the world. But for the United States to call itself 'Chicken Little,' which watches nervously as the DPP plays various kinds of games, is something new. ...

"It is truly bizarre that it takes the United States seven years to figure out that the DPP is a frog in the well, and still Washington can do nothing about it. Let's not just say that, from the United States' perspective, Taiwan is like a frog in the well. In the eyes of the Taiwan people, the DPP is a frog in the well from head to toe as well! All the U.S. government worries about is that Taiwan does not buy weapons to defend itself and that it will become strategically isolated. But as for the Taiwan people, they have not only witnessed the arrogance and incompetence of the DPP government but also have to accept the consequences of Taiwan's weakening economy and foreign relations.

"The Bush administration might as well give it some thought: The fact that this frog in the well has become so arrogant was in reality closely related to the United States, which wants but fails to play the Taiwan card well between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. The KMT was very obedient in the past, but the DPP is very naughty now. Taiwan-U.S. relations have long since deviated from their former track, and the United States' stick and carrot approach is no longer effective. Just look at how many Americans have come to Taiwan over the past few years to lobby arms deals; can the frog in the well not feel pleased and smug? ..."

D) "Use People's Power to Safeguard Taiwan's Security via a Democratic Mechanism"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] editorialized (3/3):

"Right on the sixtieth anniversary of Taiwan's 2-28 Incident, the Pentagon announced on February 28 that it will sell two kinds of advanced missiles, totaling over 400, to Taiwan. Sources added that these two kinds of missiles will be equipped on the F-16 fighter

jets in an attempt to strengthen Taiwan's capabilities to defend itself against China's threat.

"We are both happy and worried upon hearing the news. We are happy because the military imbalance across the Taiwan Strait has caused grave concerns on the part of the United States, which thus announced this arms sale according to the 'Taiwan Relations Act.' In addition, it was significant that [Washington] chose to announce the deal on the sixtieth anniversary of the 2-28 Incident. [On the other hand,] we are worried that the United States proposed this arms deal because it is concerned about Taiwan's defensive capability. But Taiwan's legislative body, with the pan-Blue camp occupying the majority of seats, will likely shelve the deal again. The destiny of the previous special arms procurements budget, which was blocked by the Blue camp in the Legislative Yuan, remains uncertain yet. In other words, even though the United States has approved [new] arms sale to Taiwan, Taiwan may not be able to get the weapons smoothly in time. ..."

E) "Chasing after Names Not so Foolish"

Nat Bellocchi, former AIT chairman and now a special adviser to the Liberty Times Group, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (3/5):

"... The US focus on cross-strait issues is primarily on lowering tensions. As important as that is, and aside from the relationship with China, the US ought to concern itself with not only the domestic politics of Taiwan, but in gaining consensus within the

many elements of the government in Washington. Taiwan's two major political parties have very different objectives that impact on the direction the nation is likely to take. The question for the US is: What should it do once the elections are over? ...

"Instead of chasing after name changes of little consequence, the US had better try to determine what future relationship with Taiwan would best serve its interest. At this stage, one party states it would establish a much broader relationship with China. Little is said about security issues, but its actions have shown that Taiwan would like not to be much involved in that issue. The other party would continue to press for its political objectives. As a consequence it may well be troublesome, but its interest will likely be in continuing close relations with its present friends, while continuing to seek dialogue with Beijing. Instead of pressing Taiwan not to change names, it would have been better if Washington had pressed China into establishing a dialogue with the elected leaders of Taiwan. Unfortunately, the US also did not seem to have the kind of dialogue with Taiwan that is needed."

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